

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 520

S E C R E T BANGKOK 19432

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PFOR, TH, US

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE PRIME
MINISTER

1. IN THE COURSE OF A LUNCHEON TO WHICH THE AMBASSADOR WAS
INVITED BY SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE PRIME MINISTER NITHIPHAT
CHALICHAN TODAY, THE FOLLOWING TOPICS WERE COVERED.

2. POLICE CORRUPTION.

A. NITHIPHAT RETURNED SEVERAL TIMES TO THE THEME
THAT ALTHOUGH CRITICS OF THE SENI GOVERNMENT PRETENDED
THAT IT WAS SUPINELY DRIFTING WITH THE TIDE, THE PUBLIC
WOULD SHORTLY BECOME AWARE OF THE MEASURES THE
GOVERNMENT WAS TAKING TO CLEAN UP THE THAI POLICE. FOR
THE FIRST TIME IN HISTROY A THAI POLICE GENERAL WOULD SOON BE
TRIED AND OTHER CASES WOULD FOLLOW SHORTLY. COMMENT:
NITHIPHAT WAS ALLUDING TO THE CASE OF POLICE MAJOR GENERAL
SANIT PIEWNUAL. NITHIPHAT DISCOURSED AT LENGTH ON
THE THEME THAT POLICE INCOMPETENCE AND CORRUPTION
CONTRIBUTED TO THE MULTIPLE INSURGENCIES WITH WHICH
THAILAND IS PLAGUED. THE PRIME MINISTER BELIEVED
THAT ONE HAD TO WORK FROM THE TOP DOWN AND IT WOULD
BE A MISTAKE TO UNDERESTIMATE HIS DETERMINATION TO
BRING ABOUT IMPROVEMENTS IN POLICE ADMINISTRATION.

B. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT IN ADDITION
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TO THE POLICE MAJOR GENERAL SANIT CASE, THE EFFORTS

BEING MADE IN THE SO-CALLED PX SCANDAL SHOULD HELP GET A FEW RATTEN APPLES OUT OF THE POLICE BARREL.

C. NITHIPHAT SAID THAT THERE WERE MANY HONEST AND ABLE POLICEMEN AND HE ASSUMED THAT THE CLEANUP WOULD PICK UP SPEED AS HIGH-LEVEL MALE FACTORS WERE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. NITHIPHAT ALSO DREW ATTENTION TO THE ARREST OF THE HEAD OF THE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT FOR MALFEASANCE IN OFFICE AS A FURTHER INDICATION OF THE SENI GOVERNMENT'S TENACITY WITH REGARD TO CORRUPTION.

3. INSURGENCY

A. NITHIPHAT SAID THAT THE TRG COULD NOT ASSUME STEADILY INCREASING DEFENSE COSTS AND THAT HE AND SENI WERE CONVINCED THAT THE SECRET TO SUBDUING THESE INSURGENCIES WAS TO IMPROVE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. HE ASKED WHETHER WE BELIEVE THAT NORTH VIETNAM WAS LIKELY TO INVADE THAILAND THROUGH LAOS.

B. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT THIS SORT OF BLATANT AGGRESSION SEEMED UNLIKELY. THE COMMUNISTS USUALLY HIDE BEHIND A FIG LEAF OF RESPECTABILITY BUT HE COULD ENVISAGE A SITUATION IN WHICH AFTER THE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS HAVE MADE FURTHER PROGRESS, HANOI MIGHT RESPOND TO A FRATERNAL APPEAL FOR DIRECT INTERVENTION. FOR THE MOMENT HANOI SEEMED TO BE MODIFYING ITS VITRIOLIC ANTI-THAI AND ANTI-ASEAN PROPAGANDA AND IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN HOW EXPANSIONIST HANOI'S POLICIES REALLY WERE.

4. MILITARY PROCUREMENT

NITHIPHAT SAID THAT THE RECENT PURCHASE OF F-5ES AND ITALIAN PATROL BOATS WOULD SHORTLY BE FOLLOWED BY THE PURCHASE OF ADDITIONAL HEAVY ARTILLERY. THE ARMY WAS CONCERNED THAT IT WAS OUTGUNNED BY NORTH VIETNAM AND WISHED TO ADD SIX ARTILLERY BATTERIES TO THE ARMY. NITHIPHAT COMMENTED THAT THAILAND WOULD STILL BE OUTGUNNED BY NORTH VIETNAM BUT THAT THIS PROCUREMENT OF ARTILLERY WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO PERVENT.

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5. BORDER PATROL POLICE

NITHIPHAT ASKED WHETHER THE U.S. COULD ASSIST IN EQUIPPING THE BORDER PATROL POLICE. NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET WOULD PROVIDE FOR A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE BPP, AND THE BPP NEEDED HELICOPTERS, RADIOS AND WEAPONS. THE AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THE LIMITATIONS ON U.S. PARTICIPATION IN POLICE PROGRAMS. HE

SUGGESTED TO NITHIPHAT THAT BPP NEEDS MIGHT WELL BE MET BY MODIFYING THE DISTRIBUTION OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT WITHIN THE VARIOUS THAI SERVICES. THERE WERE SURELY MANY M-16S IN THE HANDS OF NON-COMBATTANT UNITS WHICH COULD BE TRANSFERRED TO THE BPP.

6. THAI MILITARY PRODUCTION

NITHIPHAT ASKED WHY THE U.S. WAS NO LONGER PROVIDING BRASS AND OTHER MATERIAL FOR THE THAI SMALL ARMS PLANT. THE AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT THIS WAS A PROBLEM BUT SAID HE WOULD CHECK. WE HAVE SINCE ESTABLISHED THAT NIGHIPHAT WAS MISINFORMED. HE THEN DREW NIGHIPHAT'S ATTENTION TO THE VERY POOR PERFORMANCE OF THE THAI ARMY VEHICLE PLANT AND THE THAI BATTERY PLANT. NIGNIPHAT WAS INTERESTED AND TOOK NOTES.

7. AIT.

NITHIPHAT SAID THAT THE AIT PROBLEM WOULD HAVE TO BE REVIEWED. THE RTG SIMPLY DID NOT HAVE MONEY TO PURCHASE ONE-THIRD OF THE STOCK WITHIN ONE YEAR. THE AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THAT THIS MUST BE A MIS-UNDERSTANDING AS SUCH A REQUIREMENT HAD NEVER REPEAT NEVER BEEN MADE BY THE USG. NITHIPHAT SAID THAT THIS PROVISION WAS INCLUDED IN THE DOCUMENTS HE AHAD RECEIVED FROM MFA. (COMMENT: WE ARE WORKING ON STRAIGHTENING OUT THIS QUESTION WHICH IS TYPICAL OF THE KIND OF MUDDLES WHICH ARISE BETWEEN MFA, SUPREME COMMAND AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE.)

8. NEXT STEPS TOWARDS AGREEMENT

THE AMBASSADOR ASKED NIGHIPHAT WHAT HE FORESAW AS THE NEXT STEP IN BRINGING OUR PROLONGED NEGOTIATIONS TO AN END. NITHIPHAT SAID HE FORESAW
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THE PREPARATION OF ANOVERALL AGREEMENT TO WHICH DETAILED AGREEMENTS AN AIT, ICS AND CHIANG MAI WOULD BE APPENDED.
WHITEHOUSE

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